

Ready or Not



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From the Director's Chair

By: Chuck Lanza

The weather in South Florida can usually be described as unpredictable and frequently changing. We all got a taste of that irregularity this month, with the temperature fluctuating from a balmy 80 degrees, to down right freezing temperatures in the 30s. What is it that is causing this inconsistent weather, and what is in store for us in the months to come?

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center is saying that the outlook in South Florida for the February to April 2003 time frame will be a continuation of below normal temperatures but above normal rainfall. The reason? El Niño.

El Niño is a combination of temperature, current and trade wind changes in the Pacific Ocean. During a strong El Niño, water temperatures in the western Pacific increase, trade winds shift to the east and currents in the Pacific shift so that the upwelling of colder waters is inhibited. This leads to a rise in water levels of much warmer waters.

Currently, Equatorial Pacific water temperatures remain around one to two degrees Celsius above normal, and this anomaly has remained consistent for the past few months. A moderate El Niño event will continue throughout this time frame, and the outlook for South Florida reflects that expectation.

Naturally, South Florida receives from two to four inches of rain in February, two to three inches in March, and two to four inches in April. An El Niño

event will cause rainfall amounts across South Florida to be larger than what would normally be expected. Also, severe weather (hail, damaging straight line winds, and possibly even tornadoes) is more likely in South Florida during El Niño years.

It is important to take the current climate prediction serious and begin planning now for wet weather in the coming months. As we all know, flooding can cause great damage to property and disrupt our community if we are not prepared.



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Hazardous Weather Awareness Week

February 16 – 22, 2003

Link onto

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/>

Urban Legends

By: Niel Batista

Did you hear the one about...I'm sure you've heard about:

- Fun-loving teens lobbing lit gasoline-soaked rags into cars halted at red lights; or
- Hypodermic needles stuck in theater seats; or
- LSD tainted gumdrops.

It seems that every few months we receive a slew of emails with all kinds of dubious warnings about things that make us shake our heads in frustration or contempt. In today's atmosphere of increased suspicion and ever-present threats, terrorism-related Urban Legends are the order-of-the-day. The fact that the federal government issues new threat advisories daily or weekly makes it that much harder to separate the real warnings from the malicious fakes.

Recently, I received no less than three similar threat warnings from three different contacts. I had a few minutes to spare so I decided to follow up to see if this was a credible story. I first tried to access the website listed on the email – it didn't work. Then I tried calling a law enforcement agency and again was unable to get confirmation. In the end, I decided to kick it up to a contact in Washington...as of this writing they have been unable to confirm the threat.

While it is true that we must remain vigilant, we must also take care not to let fear override good judgment. The next time you receive a threat warning, don't just forward it, check it out first. The following websites are a good place to look for corroborating information:

- <http://www.fbi.gov/terrorinfo/terrorism.htm>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/>
- <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/osi/DomesticSecurity/>
- <http://urbanlegends.about.com/culture/urbanlegends>

American Red Cross Of Greater Miami & The Keys Response To Fires

By: Britt Peemöller

At the American Red Cross of Greater Miami & The Keys (ARCGMK), working with local fire departments is critical to ensure a prompt response to meet the immediate disaster-related needs of the families who have lost it all after a fire.

In order to best serve our community and better work with organizations that serve our communities' needs, the ARCGMK has developed this fact sheet on its response to fires.

Why Do We Assist After a Fire?

The American Red Cross is a humanitarian organization led by volunteers to provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. The core of American Red Cross Disaster Relief is the assistance given to individuals and families affected by disaster to enable them to resume their normal daily activities independently.



A Red Cross Volunteer offering comfort.

When Do We Respond to a Fire?

The American Red Cross responds to a fire at the request of the fire department or at the request of the affected family. Media representatives also play a significant role in identifying families that may need American Red Cross disaster assistance. The

Red Cross responds to fires 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Who Do We Help After a Disaster Such as a Home Fire?

The American Red Cross helps anyone who requests disaster assistance after a fire has devastated his/her home.

What Assistance is Provided to Help Families Recover After a Fire?

American Red Cross Disaster Relief focuses on meeting individual's immediate disaster-related needs. American Red Cross caseworkers comfort individuals affected by disaster and issue disbursing orders to help families get back on their feet. These disbursing orders may be redeemed at approved American Red Cross Disaster Relief vendor locations for necessities such as: food, critical medicine, clothing, housing needs (up to a 3 night motel stay*), shoes, or toiletries.

How Do We Provide Resources to Respond After a Fire?

The American Red Cross relies on its corps of trained volunteers to respond to disasters and provide assistance to affected families. All disaster assistance is free. The American Red Cross is able to provide relief to families thanks to generous financial contributions made by individuals and businesses in our community.

Where Do We Respond to Fires?

The American Red Cross of Greater Miami & The Keys responds to fires in Miami-Dade (305) 644-1200 and Monroe Counties (305) 296-4033.

Visit us on the web at <http://www.miamiredcross.org/>

How Can You Help Families Recover After a Fire?

To help families recover after a fire you may make a financial contribution by calling your American Red Cross in Miami-Dade or Broward County.

Who responds to a fire?

American Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) members respond to do a damage assessment of

the affected residence in order to best meet the immediate emergency needs of the people affected.

Public Information Officers (PIO) are also on scene, helping get the word out about how the Red Cross is assisting those affected.

American Red Cross PIO's who serve on a weekly on-call schedule are:

Annette Barket (305) 216-9316

Britt Peemöller (305) 219-4464

The criteria for PIO response are the following:

- Media is present
- Someone has passed away as a result of the fire
- There is total devastation (code 1) and occurred within the past 2 hours
- The fire is active
- More than one family is affected
- In November, December and January, if the fire is caused by a candle, holiday lighting or a heater.

We look forward to our continued partnership to educate the South Florida community on the importance of fire safety and helping people prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters. Should you have additional requests please contact Britt Peemöller at (305) 728-2572.

*Red Cross shelters are opened as needed for disaster assistance cases involving multiple families.

The Public Assistance Program and Donated Resources

By: Nixsa Serrano

Eligible applicants for the Public Assistance Program should realize the importance of documentation and how thorough and accurate documentation can assist them in reducing the portion of the funds that their organization will be responsible for. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will pay for 75% of the

costs incurred, the State is responsible for 12.5% and the local government or applicant is responsible for the remaining 12.5% of the costs incurred. However, donated resources such as volunteer labor, donated equipment and materials can be used to offset the portion of the costs incurred by the applicant.

FEMA allows credit for volunteer labor and donated equipment and materials that are used in the performance of emergency work during the emergency period for categories A and B, which are debris removal, and protective measures.



Volunteers lend assistance after a disaster.

However, only certain types of items are eligible for credit. For example, donated resources must apply to emergency work that is eligible under the public assistance program such as removal of debris; donated materials used in the prevention of a disaster such as sandbags or other donated resources, and materials used to meet the immediate threats to life and property. When using volunteers, it is always best to use contracted individuals since you are eligible to request reimbursement for those individuals and not for employees performing work during their normal course of duties.

The value of volunteer labor used for reimbursement purposes can be calculated in one of two ways. The rate used for the volunteer labor can be based upon the same rate used for a similar position within the applicant's organization if that type of position exists within their organization, or based upon the fair market value for that type of position within the same labor market. In terms of the value of donated

equipment, the number of donated hours the equipment was used is multiplied by the applicant's or FEMA's equipment rate, whichever is lower. Out of pocket expenses incurred in the operation of this equipment can be claimed as a donation for credit unless that expense is already being reimbursed in another location.

If you would like more information about eligibility for the Public Assistance Program, visit FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/rrr/pa/>.

From the Eyes of a Terrorist

By: Henry Bovo

On October 1 2002, the Office of Emergency Management in conjunction with the six (6) fire departments and City of Miami police, held a small-scale terrorist drill with a chemical agent. The drill took place at the Miami Jai Alai. I had the privilege of playing the role of one of the terrorists. I was putting the chemicals in the air units of the Jai Alai, and got some on myself in the process.

When the City of Miami Fire Department became aware of the situation they took control of the scene until the Hazmat Teams set up and got ready to meet terror face-to-face. The fire department hosed me down until the City of Miami Police Department got ready to deal with me.

They came in with their guns drawn and ordered me to get down on the floor and "assume the position." They were successful in cuffing me, and now had to drag me to the decontamination units that



City of Miami Police take down a "terrorist."

were set up for the victims. Once put through the decontamination units, which I would love to say hurt, I was seated and awaited transportation to the jail. I must say I feel for any terrorist caught by the City of Miami Police Department.

I would like to thank everyone that participated, and I must tell everyone that we are ready for any crazy terrorist attack.



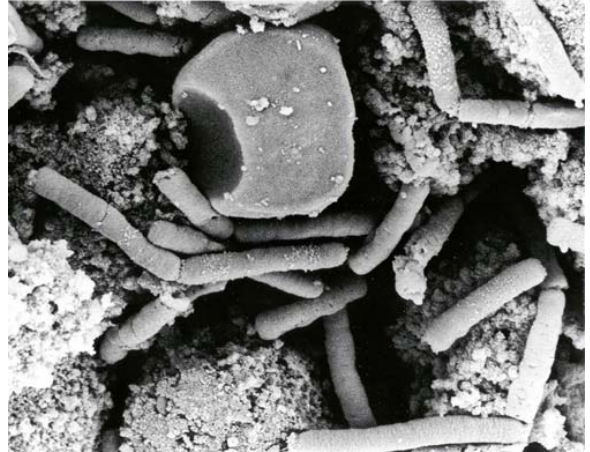
"Terrorist Henry Ben Bovo" being led away by Police.

Miami-Laboratory Gains International Recognition

By: Alejandro Sera

The State Public Health Laboratory-Miami will be conducting Level A training for hospital laboratories to presumptively identify agents used for bioterrorism (e.g. *Bacillus anthracis*).

The State Public Health Laboratory-Miami is the first certified BioSafety Level (BSL) III-C facility in the State of Florida. The Miami facility has been working and coordinating closely with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other health agencies to prepare and respond to bioterrorism. In fact, the Miami facility is the first laboratory to participate in validation studies with the CDC prior to the bioterrorism event of 2001. The Miami facility is also the first laboratory, outside of the CDC and the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Diseases, that is equipped and proficient enough to perform specialized assays for rapid detection of bioterrorism agents (which include high priority agents, arboviruses, and biotoxins).



Anthrax vegetative cells

This capacity is highlighted by its experience with the CDC, U.S. Postal Inspections, and Federal Bureau of Investigation of effectively handling and analyzing the first bioterrorism event of 2001 in the United States. The Miami laboratory provided rapid identification of *B. anthracis*, evidence recovery, and support for intervention (by aiding in the administration of prophylaxis).

The State Public Health Laboratory-Miami continues to be the leading laboratory in providing rapid diagnostics of *B. anthracis*; this is exemplified by the recent collaboration with the FBI and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry during their investigation at the contaminated building of the American Media Incorporated in Boca Raton. Such experience and performance have given the Miami Laboratory international recognition of having the capabilities in providing diagnostic services for nationwide and worldwide bioterrorism.

Shelter "Seeing" Eye Dogs

By: Ralph Carrillo

During times of emergency evacuation, people may not want to part with their pet to go to a hurricane evacuation center. Remember that pets are not allowed in the centers. However, don't be quick to think an evacuee is sneaking in an animal. Service animals are not pets and must be allowed to enter the evacuation center. Some people with disabilities depend on these animals to assist them with critical activities that some of us take for granted, like seeing,

hearing, and even moving. What is a service animal and how do you distinguish it between a pet?

Q: What is a service animal?

A: The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

Service animals perform functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for him or herself. "Seeing eye dogs" are one type of service animal, used by some individuals who are blind. This is the type of service animal with which most people are familiar. But there are service animals that assist persons with other kinds of disabilities in their day-to-day activities. Some examples include:

- ❖ Alerting persons with hearing impairments to sounds
- ❖ Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking things up for persons with mobility impairments
- ❖ Assisting persons with mobility impairments with balance.
- ❖

Q: How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?

A: Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. However, an individual who is going to a restaurant or theater is not likely to be carrying documentation of his or her medical condition or disability. Therefore, such documentation generally may not be required as a condition for providing service to an individual accompanied by a service animal. Although a number of states have programs to certify animals, you may not insist on proof of

state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability.



Pet or Service Animal?

Hurricane evacuation center staff, when encountering a service animal will make sure that the person and the animal are designated an area where the person will have easy access to shelter activities (feeding, sleeping, bathroom).

For additional information please visit the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** web page at : <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/animal.htm>

